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SIPDIS

SIPDIS FROM A/S DANIEL SULLIVAN TO AMBASSADORS, DCMS, ECON
COUNSELORS, PAOS, AND AG COUNSELORS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [TBIO](#) [KPAO](#)

SUBJECT: FY 2008 BIOTECHNOLOGY OUTREACH STRATEGY
AND DEPARTMENT RESOURCES

Ref: State 163528

¶1. (U) Summary. This cable lays out our FY 2008 biotech outreach strategy and describes some of the resources available to posts as we seek to encourage the use of agricultural biotechnology. Agricultural biotechnology has great potential to help address the challenges of rural economic development and food insecurity. To realize this potential, and to protect the interests of U.S. farmers and exporters we seek to facilitate trade in agbiotech products by promoting understanding of the technology and encouraging the adoption of fair, transparent, and science-based policies and practices in other countries. We also want to promote biotechnology as a tool for supporting economic growth and improving food safety and security in developing countries. Finally, we are committed to working both bilaterally and in international bodies to ensure that the products of agricultural biotechnology do not encounter unfair trade barriers or violations of intellectual property rights.

¶2. (U) This cable outlines key elements of our current biotech strategy as well as some of the tools and resources (including, as in previous years, EEB's biotech outreach funds) available to help posts pursue an active biotech agenda in supporting this strategy. I urge you to encourage the various sections and agencies in your missions to work together as they pursue our shared goals on this issue. I particularly encourage missions in "high priority" biotech countries (paragraph 5), to prepare thoughtful, interagency coordinated proposals for use of this year's EEB biotech outreach funds (paragraphs 12-19). The deadline for these proposals is January 30, 2008; however we will begin allocating EEB biotech outreach funds before the deadline. End Summary.

Strategy

¶3. (U) As agbiotech enters its second decade of commercialization, we have a vital opportunity to capitalize on the increasingly widespread cultivation of biotech crops and the favorable WTO ruling in our biotech case against the European Union. Some countries, many in the developing world, have hesitated to join in the biotech revolution, in part because of concerns over European opposition. The WTO ruling should send a strong signal to those countries.

¶4. (U) Following are some of our key biotech objectives for 2008:

---To take full advantage of the WTO decision by explaining the significance of the case, particularly to developing countries, and by stressing the global scientific consensus on the safety of agbiotech products demonstrated by the WTO final panel decision.

---To publicize the benefits of agbiotech as a development tool by stressing the poverty alleviation and food security benefits of the reduced inputs and increased yields offered by agbiotech. Our messages should reinforce the environmental gains from decreased use of insecticides and reduced soil erosion, stress the potential for improved nutrition and disease prevention, and encourage the development and commercialization of agbiotech products that meet the unique needs of developing nations.

---To continue to open markets and advocate responsible regulation, by following up to ensure EU compliance with the WTO ruling, by minimizing the trade impact of the Protocol on Biosafety (Cartagena Protocol), and by encouraging trade facilitative guidance in the Codex Alimentarius. The Fourth Conference of Parties of the Cartagena Protocol will be held in May 2008 in Germany and will be crucial to our efforts as we continue to work bilaterally and in multilateral institutions to ensure that global commerce in agbiotech products is not unfairly impeded.

---As a new goal in FY 2008, to promote understanding of the potential of agbiotech to contribute to production of biofuels, and to help ensure food safety.

15. (U) Although our biotech strategy is a global one, we plan to pay particular attention to advancing this strategy through active engagement with key countries, with the medium-term goal of establishing models of agbiotech trade and development

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success that can be a powerful demonstration to others. These key countries in FY 2008 include:

---Brazil
---Burkina Faso
---China
---Colombia
---Czech Republic
---Egypt
---Germany
---Ghana
---India
---Indonesia
---Kenya
---Nicaragua
---Nigeria
---Peru
---Philippines
---Romania
---Russia
---South Africa
---Thailand
---Ukraine
---Vatican
---Vietnam

The State Biotech Advocacy Toolkit

16. (U) The Department works with a host of other USG agencies, international organizations, NGOs and industry to promote understanding and acceptance of biotechnology as well as new initiatives related to this technology. Within the State Department, the Office of Agricultural, Biotechnology and Textile Trade Affairs (EB/TPP/ABT) takes primary responsibility within State for agbiotech issues.

17. (U) State and other USG agencies, such as USDA and USAID,

have resources to help posts support USG biotech policy. Close collaboration among all relevant embassy sections and agencies is key to ensuring that posts fully exploit the range of available USG biotech resources. Historically, those posts that have been most successful at putting together convincing agbiotech advocacy programs are those that have established working groups within their embassies. In order to facilitate effective coordination between EEB and the field on agbiotech issues, posts should forward points of contact for agbiotech issues to EEB/TPP/ABT, John Finn and Gary Clements.

¶8. (U) To support your biotech efforts, posts are encouraged to use the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) and the IIP Speakers Program, the latter of which EEB helps fund. IIP maintains an excellent website at http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/biotechnology.html. Posts should consider including agbiotech participants---under their regular allotments---for the IVLP program. For example, visits to U.S. farms where biotech crops are being cultivated, as well as discussions with U.S. farmers, have proven to be effective ways of dispelling concerns about biotech on the part of foreign visitors. Posts should consider adding a biotech component to IV programs for a wide range of opinion leaders, not just biotech specialists.

¶9. (U) Specially designed biotech Voluntary Visitors projects involving host government officials, industry leaders, and academics might also be considered. The Foreign Press Center could arrange biotech reporting tours for both U.S. based foreign media or arrange visits by foreign media to the U.S. PAO's should coordinate these efforts directly with the relevant PA and ECA offices, though EB/TPP/ABT would appreciate receiving info copies of proposals and nominations, and stands ready to assist ECA and posts with programming efforts.

¶10. (U) Staff members of EEB's office of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Textile Affairs (EB/TPP/ABT), are available as appropriate to advocate in host capitals, troubleshoot problematic legislation, and participate as public speakers on agbiotech.

¶11. (U) Perhaps most importantly, EEB has available biotech outreach funds which can be allocated to posts to further agbiotech policy and promote acceptance of the technology. The funds are administered by EEB's Office of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Textile Trade Affairs, with the assistance of EEB/EX, and are detailed below.

EEB'S BIOTECH OUTREACH FUNDS FOR FY 2008

¶12. (U) The Bureau of Economic, Energy, and Business Affairs
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(EEB) has received funding in each of the last five fiscal years for outreach projects related to agricultural biotechnology. Although the full level of funding for fiscal year 2008 is not yet certain, EEB encourages posts to propose projects such as conferences, workshops and seminars to take advantage of these funds to promote the acceptance of ag biotech.

¶13. (U) Funds are targeted towards public outreach to develop support for USG trade and development policy positions on biotechnology. Projects should aim to provide accurate information on the benefits of biotechnology to policymakers and consumers in other countries and to encourage the adoption of science-based regulatory systems. In the light of discussions with Congressional staff, funds should be used to create support for USG positions in regions outside the European Union (EU) or to limit the influence of EU negative views on biotechnology. However, we will consider on a case by case basis proposals from EUR posts that are consistent with our overall strategy.

¶14. (U) One goal is to facilitate trade in agbiotech products by promoting understanding of the technology and encouraging the adoption of fair, transparent, and science-based policies and practices in other countries. Another important goal is to promote understanding of biotechnology as a tool for supporting economic growth and improving food safety and security in developing countries. Starting this year we encourage proposals that address uses of biotechnology in the production of biofuels.

¶15. (U) Acceptance of funds is contingent on post agreeing to provide within one month of completion of the project a report including the following elements:

- A detailed description of the audience reached (number of attendees and nature of audience, e.g. producers, consumers, policymakers), with a particular emphasis on those individuals that may influence national biotech policy.

- Analysis on whether the program influenced public perceptions.

- Level of media coverage (and, if possible, the size of the audience serviced by media).

¶16. (U) We urge post public diplomacy officers to consult with econ officers, EST officers, and Foreign Agricultural Service staff in crafting proposed projects prior to submission of requests. IIP will be sending separate messages to select posts soliciting proposals for speaker projects as funds become available from EEB. Posts are encouraged to send proposals for FY 08 agbiotech projects to the Department not later than January 30, 2008. Projects received after that date will be considered based on available resources.

Requests should outline:

- The cost of the proposed program;
- The target audiences;
- The specific agbiotech issues to be addressed;
- How the project would help meet USG policy objectives (purpose and impact);
- Proposed length of program;
- Name of post responsible officer and contact information.

¶17. (U) Program proposals will be reviewed by EEB/TPP/ABT. Please slug cables for EEB/TPP/ABT/BTT - John Finn (finnjw@state.gov) and Gary Clements (clements@state.gov).

¶18. (U) EEB/TPP/ABT will work with posts to further develop promising proposals. Average size of program has been \$10,000-25,000, with some as small as \$2,000 and others as large as \$100,000.

¶19. (U) EEB's Biotech Outreach funds come with a number of restrictions on how they can be used, so only certain types of projects are appropriate. Applicable restrictions include:

- Funds may be used to pay for travel by participants or speakers to an international meeting or conference hosted by the USG in the United States or for travel by speakers from the United States to another country.

- EEB funds cannot be used for International Visitor programs or to fund other travel by non-government employees;

- Funds cannot be used for representational events or to provide food or beverages for receptions or meals;

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- Funds cannot be provided as grants or otherwise to provide foreign assistance or training;

-- The funds expire at the end of the fiscal year.

Background

¶20. (U) In the last ten years more than 475 million hectares/1.1 billion acres of biotechnology crops have been planted around the world. Last year, nearly two dozen countries grew biotechnology crops on more than 240 million acres/100 million hectares. Agbiotech growth continues even in Europe: six EU member states now grow biotech crops.

¶21. (U) This is not just a technology for large agribusinesses. More than ninety percent of farmers benefiting from the technology are in the developing world. In 2006, some 9.3 million small farmers in the developing world benefited from biotechnology crops. Biotech plantings in the developing world increased by 21% in 2006. Biotech offers the potential to help developing countries attack the cycle of poverty, address food security needs, and improve farmers' lives and incomes. Studies indicate remarkable gains by farmers adopting biotech cotton in India, leading to record cotton exports. Scientists are developing new crops that resist drought and disease and provide health benefits to farmers and nutritional benefits to consumers, as well as ensure a reliable supply of staple crops for the developing world (see USTR's Fact Sheet on agbiotech and development): http://ustr.gov/assets/Trade_Sectors/Agriculture/Biotechnology/asset_upload_file372_8905.pdf).

¶22. (U) Agbiotech also provides environmental benefits. Adoption of biotech crops has significantly reduced insecticide use (by an estimated 172,000 metric tons of active ingredients from 1996-2004), and has allowed many farmers to adopt no till farming practices, thereby reducing soil erosion and consumption of energy and water. Reduced use of pesticides in China (an estimated 67 percent reduction in applications among biotech cotton farmers since 2003) has resulted in significant health benefits to Chinese cotton farmers, who previously suffered from exposure to dangerous and sometimes lethal levels of pesticides (see USTR's Fact Sheet on agbiotech and the environment): http://ustr.gov/assets/Trade_Sectors/Agriculture/Biotechnology/asset_upload_file850_8906.pdf).

¶23. (U) These positive developments form the backdrop against which the WTO dispute settlement panel issued its recent decision in the biotech case filed against the EU by the United States, Canada and Argentina. The panel agreed that the EU moratorium on approvals of biotech products and Member State bans on previously approved products were not science-based and, therefore, were inconsistent with WTO rules (Reftel).

¶24. (U) For additional informational materials (including fact sheets, remarks, and related links on agbiotech) addressees should visit the EB/TPP/ABT/BTT website at www.state.gov/e/eb/tpp/c10319.htm.

¶25. (U) M/P has cleared on this telegram.

¶26. (U) Minimize considered.
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